

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Theodore N. Vail, September 30, 1911

Sept. 30, 1911. Mr. Theodore A. Vail, The House, Speedwell Farms, Lyndon, Vermont.

Dear Mr. Vail:

Many thanks for your note of Sept. 23, and for your courtesy in having me made a director of the American Bell Telephone Company for the purpose of giving me the privilege of a telephone and telegraph frank. I can assure you I appreciate your thoughtfulness in this matter and would gladly accept the frank if I could do so conscientiously.

I learn, however, from your note that it is impossible, under the laws governing inter-state companies, to give such franks to those not having official connection. As I do not have any official connection with telephone or telegraph companies, I am not entitled to the frank, and cannot accept it.

In order to give me an official connection which would enable me to accept the frank, you have had me made a director of the American Bell Telephone Company, a Company which is practically defunct, although I understand from your note that the old organization is still kept alive, at least upon paper. I must thank you very much for the kind thought that led you to do this but I cannot accept a directorship in the Company; for the reason that I do not wish to put myself in the position of appearing to evade the law for the purpose of getting a telegraph frank, and I conceive that this would be my position were I to accept a directorship in a Company that is practically nonexistent.

Yours sincerely, Alexander Graham Bell P. S. I return the Western Union Telegraph Company frank A 2 with my best thanks for your courtesy in the matter. A.G.B.